

PATENT APPLICATION PAPERS

OF

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FOR: CELLULAR PHONE HOLDER WITH CHARGER
MOUNTED TO VEHICLE DASHBOARD

09708943-110900

RELATED DISCLOSURE DOCUMENT

A Disclosure Document No. 479497 was filed in the Patent and Trademark Office on September 5, 2000.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention provides a vehicle mounting device and, in particular, a mounting device located on or in a vehicle dashboard for holding and powering a cell phone.

2. Description of the Prior Art

As the number of technology innovations increase, more devices are developed specifically for use in vehicles or sufficiently compact to be used in the vehicle. The devices may be placed on vehicle dashboards and powered, either directly or indirectly, via the vehicle cigarette lighter. A likelihood exists that vehicle manufacturers may add a second cigarette lighter on top of the dashboard to accommodate these devices without eliminating the cigarette lighter function. Further, cell phones are being developed with video cameras built in for conveying image data over the cell phone audio channel. Although conceptually there is a need for a built-in accessory or an add-on accessory platform that bolts onto the dashboard to support and power these devices, a power connection is still required. Direct wiring to the cigarette lighter would leave dangling wires, marring the appearance of the vehicle interior. U.S. Patent No. 5,687,234 to Chang discloses a

charger for a mobile phone wherein the charger case, in one embodiment, couples the phone to the vehicle lighter socket. The charger is a separate unit and not attached to the vehicle itself.

What is thus desired is to provide a mounting device associated with the vehicle dashboard for holding and powering electronic devices that are capable of use within a vehicle, and, in particular, to hold and power cell phones.

SUMMARY OF THE PRESENT INVENTION

The present invention provides an accessory platform, or mounting, either bolted onto the exterior of a vehicle dashboard or built into the vehicle dashboard either as an after market accessory or offered as an option in a vehicle being purchased to hold and power cell phones.

The video camera portion of a cell phone having this feature is positioned to view, or scan, through the windshield or towards the back of the vehicle and its interior.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

For better understanding of the present invention as well as other objects and further features thereof, reference is made to the following description which is to be read in conjunction with the accompanying drawing therein.

Figure 1 is a perspective view of the video cell phone mounting device of the present invention;

Figure 2A is a side elevation of the mounting device shown in

Figure 1 and Figure 2B illustrates the mounting socket utilized in the present invention;

Figure 3 is a side elevational view/partial cross-sectional view illustrating one version of the mounting device of the present invention in the open position;

Figure 4 illustrates the mounting device shown in Figure 3 in the closed, or storage, position;

Figure 5 is a second embodiment of the mounting device of the present invention;

Figure 6 is a perspective view of the embodiment shown in Figure 5;

Figure 7 is a perspective view of a vehicle dashboard showing a cell phone holder and charger mounted to the vehicle dashboard; and

Figure 8 is a third embodiment of the mounting device of the present invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Referring now to Figures 1, 2A and 2B, a preferred embodiment of the present invention is illustrated. In particular, a holder 10 with charger 11 is shown positioned on the top of a vehicle dashboard 12. A cell phone 14 having a video camera 16 is shown positioned in holder 10 (the holder of the present invention can be used with conventional cell phones not incorporating a video camera). As illustrated, a cigarette lighter plug 18 is positioned within dashboard 12, holder 10 being positioned such that power

unit associated with holder 10 can be inserted into the lighter plug 18. It should be noted that cell phone 14 may either be charged or have its own power source, thus not requiring the use of the holder power unit. A ball joint interface 22 to plug 18 allows the holder 10, and thus video camera 16, to be adjusted to provide various angles of view (alternate techniques are available for providing two axis of rotation). Ball joint interface 22 comprises a male ball retainer having a ball element 25 and a female retainer portion 27. A receptacle jack (not shown) is built into dashboard 12. Holder 10 is attached via ball joint 22 to the cigarette lighter plug 18 and power is conveyed via positive and negative contacts formed as part of the conventional cigarette lighter outlet.

Figure 3 illustrates a second embodiment of the invention wherein the holder 10 is mounted to the inside cover 30 of a compartment, or housing, 32 formed on the top of vehicle dashboard 12 via a ball type swivel device 34 and shown in the open position. A door handle 36 enables the door 30 to be open or closed; hinge 38 connects cover 30 to compartment 32; and angle adjuster 40 enables the cover to be fixedly closed and full opened (shown) positions.

Figure 4 is similar to Figure 3 showing holder 10 within compartment 32 in the closed, or stored, position.

Figure 5 illustrates a third embodiment of the present invention wherein holder 10 is mounted within a compartment, or housing, 42 formed in dashboard 12. The compartment 42 is accessible by a user from the front of the dashboard 12.

Figure 6 illustrates a fourth embodiment wherein the cell phone 14 is mounted on holder 10 within compartment, or housing, 44 formed in dashboard 12. A sliding door 46 with handle 48 encloses compartment 44 to provide a pleasing appearance when cell phone 14 is not in use. Note that in this version the video camera 16 can only view the interior of the vehicle.

Figure 7 is a perspective view showing the holder/charger 10 shown in Figure 1 positioned on the top of dashboard 12.

Figure 8 is a fourth embodiment of the present invention. In particular, holder/charger 10 is mounted, via ball type angle adjuster 62, to a raised dashboard component 64 via a ball-joint 66 towards the front of dashboard 12. The dashed lines show an optimal dashboard extension which raises the height of dashboard 12 enabling the video camera 16 to be better positioned to view the interior of the vehicle.

Note that the cell phone may be hung from the vehicle rear view mirror or on the windshield; means to stabilize and dampen the swinging effects that would occur can be provided. Power connections are supplied at the rear view mirror, sun visor or the windshield.

While the invention has been described with reference to its preferred embodiments, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that various changes may be made and equivalents may be substituted for elements thereof without departing from the true spirit and scope of the invention. In addition, many modifications may be made to adapt a particular situation or material to the

teachings of the invention without departing from its essential teachings.

09708948-110900